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Court reassigns cases involving kids

Some attorneys call move illegal

BY JACK KRESNAK
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

November 13, 2006

Hundreds of abused, neglected and delinquent children in Wayne County soon will get new attorneys to represent them in court -- a move some attorneys say is illegal.

Hoping to speed up the handling of cases in the juvenile division of Wayne County Family Court, Wayne County Circuit Court Chief Judge Mary Beth Kelly has begun replacing attorneys previously assigned to handle these cases with new teams of lawyers assigned to specific courtrooms.

Kelly said the changes will improve legal representation for children who are either the victims of abuse or neglect or who have committed crimes or other offenses.

But attorneys who have been representing the children on a case-by-case basis -- called lawyers-guardians ad litem (LGALs) -- say the change will disrupt the continuity of legal representation. And many say they are offended that they will be asked to turn over their files to new attorneys.

John Owdziej, president of the Trial Lawyers Association of Wayne County Juvenile Court, said the move violates the rights of children and the group is considering taking legal action against the court, including a possible lawsuit.

"It's illegal and it's contrary to the court rules, at a minimum," Owdziej said. "The request to turn over your files is really unprecedented."

Owdziej predicted that the new LGALs soon would find themselves overwhelmed with cases and unable to follow a court mandate to visit child clients every three months.

Kelly's idea, which has been approved by the Michigan Supreme Court, is to have teams of LGALs working in the same courtrooms so that all of the cases heard by a referee would have the same set of lawyers representing the children. Overall, about 15 lawyers would be involved, Kelly said.

So far, the court has negotiated contracts with two groups of lawyers to do the work: the Michigan Children's Law Center and the Legal Aid and Defender Association, which has represented a large percentage of children in Wayne County's juvenile court for years.

Kelly said the county is in final negotiations for three more contracts to cover all 13 referee courtrooms. The contracts will cost about \$4.7 million this fiscal year and cover about 5,682 petitions representing an unknown number of children, Kelly said.

Kelly said the court is taking the action to increase the percentage of cases that meet strict time requirements in juvenile cases. According to Michigan Supreme Court guidelines, juvenile courts should adjudicate 90% of their cases within the time standards. Kelly said the court in Wayne County meets the standards only about 50% of the time.

"Having specific teams of lawyers assigned to specific courtrooms allows the court to implement docket management schedules that will allow us to be more efficient," Kelly said. "If children's lawyers are assigned to a specific courtroom, their schedules are going to match the schedule of the judge or referee."

Kelly said changing children's attorneys would occur only after a trial where the court takes legal jurisdiction over a child or after the first quarterly review of a case.

The cases of all children who are court wards because of abuse or neglect are reviewed every three months and LGALs are required to visit their clients before each hearing.

Kelly said she doesn't believe there is a solid attorney-client relationship between many children and their lawyers.

"We find that many times because of the high rate of substitution, our children don't know who their lawyers are to begin with," the judge said.
"We believe that the representation of children will be greatly enhanced by the new system."

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Attorneys at odds with Wayne Co. judge reassigning children cases

DETROIT -- Hoping to speed up juvenile cases in Wayne County Family Court, hundreds of abused, neglected and delinquent children soon will get new representation in court — a move some attorneys say is illegal.

Circuit Court Chief Judge Mary Beth Kelly has begun replacing attorneys previously assigned to handle these cases with new teams of lawyers assigned to specific courtrooms, the Detroit Free Press reported Monday. Kelly said the changes will improve legal representation for children.

But attorneys who have been representing the children on a case-by-case basis — called lawyers-guardians ad litem — say the change will disrupt the continuity of legal representation. And many say they are offended that they will be asked to turn over their files to new attorneys.

"It's illegal and it's contrary to the court rules, at a minimum," John Owdziej, president of the Trial Lawyers Association of Wayne County Juvenile Court, said. "The request to turn over your files is really unprecedented."

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Article published Nov 13, 2006

Murder trial to begin today in toddler death

Opening arguments were expected to begin this morning in a scheduled three-day trial of murder suspect Sonya Moussaed, who is accused of beating 17-month-old Gracie Simmons to death.

The trial was to begin today in Monroe County Circuit Judge Joseph A. Costello Jr.'s courtroom. Testimony is to be held today and Tuesday and could conclude Thursday. Wednesday is an off-day.

Ms. Moussaed, 27, is accused of beating the toddler to death on April 20 in a house on Hubble St.

Monroe County Medical Examiner Dr. Carl Schmidt testified earlier that Gracie suffered a severe beating that included her head being slammed against an object seven times, causing a skull fracture and brain injuries. He ruled the death a homicide.

Monroe County Assistant Prosecutor Allison Arnold is prosecuting the case. Monroe attorney Lawrence Coogan is defending Ms. Moussaed.

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Article published Nov 12, 2006

Judge orders trial in child abuse case

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A Nigerian woman living illegally in the United States was ordered Thursday to stand trial amid allegations she abused her 6-year-old daughter at her Westland apartment.

Onyinyechi Joy Ogundu, 25, appeared in Westland 18th District Court and waived her preliminary hearing on charges of second- and third-degree child abuse.

Her decision averted testimony and prompted Judge Gail McKnight to order her to stand trial in Wayne County Circuit Court. Ogundu, jailed in lieu of a \$50,000 cash bond, could face penalties ranging up to four years in prison, if she's found guilty as charged.

Ogundu is accused of abusing her 6-year-old daughter from August 2005 through October 2006 at Woodcrest Villa, an apartment complex on the city's north side, off Wayne Road south of Joy.

According to police Sgt. Debra Mathews, the girl was tied up, beaten with cords and sticks, and made to contort her body and stand in difficult positions, such as balancing on her left foot while leaning forward and putting her right index finger on the floor.

A scarf also was tied around the girl's mouth, Mathews has said.

Ogundu was arrested in October after employees at Garfield Elementary School in Livonia suspected that the girl was being abused, Mathews said. The child had scars that police believe were the result of abuse.

The girl has been placed in a foster home. A not-guilty plea has been entered in Ogundu's court file as she awaits trial. If convicted, she could be deported after she serves any prison time she may receive.

Published November 13, 2006
[From Lansing State Journal]

Monday's letters to the editor

Focus on neglect

It's the same old mantra of right-to-lifers is "every baby as the right to be born." Yeah, it's so much better to be born, then be tortured and starved to death after two, three, six years anyway.

Almost daily the newspaper has a horror story in it about what parents do to their kids. And Ricky Holland sure did live his 7 years, didn't he?

Now I don't remember anything I experienced in my mother's womb, but I guarantee I would remember it if she hadn't have wanted me and abused me my whole childhood.

If people can't use birth control and really don't want the child, I'd rather they get an abortion than make that child's life a living hell. So, instead of "save all fetuses" how about saving all of the already living, neglected children already out there?

Michelle Murphy
Mason

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November 11, 2006

State sex offender sweep seizes 552

Tom Greenwood / The Detroit News

The Michigan State Police announced the arrest of 552 sex offenders after a two-week statewide sweep. The effort, dubbed Operation Verify, was a statewide initiative aimed at making sure that offenders comply with the state's sex offender law.

Police said another 622 arrest warrants were requested as part of the operation, which involved at least 125 law enforcement agencies and prosecutor's offices. Operation Verify was Michigan's third coordinated sex offender sweep. Since the first statewide sweep in 2005, 1,800 people have been arrested.

Police zeroed in on felons who failed to update or verify their address as required between Oct. 1 and Oct. 15. Officers also conducted nearly 4,000 random residence checks of registered sex offenders to make sure they were living up to the terms of the Registered Sex Offenders Act.

"Basically, we divide up the list and then go to the addresses that are listed with the offenders," said Michigan State Police Trooper Jeff Miazga.

"The checkup could be at any time during the day or night. Sex offenders have specific rules to which they must abide; if the offenders aren't in compliance, we put the cuffs on them and take them in. For misdemeanor offenses, they're offered bond at the jail. Felons are held until they can see a judge."

Of the 552 arrests, 241 were felonies for failure to register or failure to change an address; 268 were misdemeanors for failure to verify an address; and 43 were for other misdemeanor sex offender registry violations, including failure to pay the registration fee and failure to sign the registration form.

To view the Michigan Public Sex Offender Registry online, go to www.mipsor.state.mi.us.

You can reach Tom Greenwood at (313) 222-2023 or tgreenwood@detnews.com.

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ClickOnDetroit.com

Local Businessman Charged With Internet Sex Crimes

UPDATED: 8:42 pm EST November 9, 2006

A Macomb county businessman was charged with child sex abuse Thursday, Local 4 reported.

Investigators said the 53-year-old man tried to use the Internet to arrange sex with a 5-year-old girl.

Police said he is the CEO of a Warren credit union, where they made the arrest Thursday.

His work computer was confiscated because they think at least one of his online conversations took place there.

Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said a deputy posing as a mother with two children began having online conversations with the man about 10 days ago.

Hackel said the man asked if he could have sex with the child while the mother watched.

Police said they also went to the man's Clinton Township home, where the man's wife allegedly led them to six marijuana plants in their sunroom. The police extracted the plants from the house.

He is facing numerous charges of sex and computer crimes, and his bond has been set at \$750,000, Local 4 reported.

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Warren ban would keep sex offenders from parks

Council to consider ordinance on Tuesday

BY DAN CORTEZ
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

November 13, 2006

There are 39,000 Michigan residents on the Michigan Sex Offender Registry. And Mindy Moore wants to make sure none of them finds his way to a Warren park or recreation center.

Moore, a city councilwoman, has proposed banning registered sex offenders from the city's 20 parks and recreation centers. The council will consider the ban Tuesday at its regular meeting, but a final decision won't be made until later this month at the earliest.

"The goal is to keep sexual predators away from women and children," Moore said Friday. "It gives police another tool to keep them away. I don't think there's any disagreement that everybody wants to keep sexual predators away from people."

Moore proposed the ban in August, and city officials have spent the past several months writing the new ordinance for consideration. Moore was quickly criticized because she was categorizing sexual predators with those who are on the registry for having consensual sex with their teenage partners. Moore said state legislation has mandated that the offenders be placed on the list, and that it would be impossible for officers to differentiate between who is a serious violent offender and who isn't.

"I know there are some people who have a problem with the registry," she said. "I agree it's flawed in some ways. Police don't want an ordinance that includes some sex offenders and not others."

Katy Pavlik, a Warren mother of four, lives close enough to Veterans Park that she can walk her kids there. She said the registry casts an unfair net on some people, but child predators need to be kept away.

"I think in general it's a really good idea, but the registry needs to get fixed," Pavlik said. "I think true children predators should be banned from parks and where kids play."

Moore, a mother of two, said she expects that other members of the council will support ordinance.

The meeting begins at 8 p.m. at the Warren Community Center, 5460 Arden Road.

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Philadelphia child welfare agency making changes

PHILADELPHIA The city of Philadelphia is taking steps to make sure that all of the children under its care are actually getting care.

The new leader of the Department of Human Services plans to have caseworkers revisit all 26-thousand children that the agency is responsible for.

Acting Commissioner Arthur Evans also wants to review the performance of contractors hired to monitor thousands of youngsters in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

Evans calls the moves an effort to "begin to re-establish the credibility" of his agency.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reports that at least 20 children died of abuse or neglect between 2003 and 2005 after coming to the agency's attention.

Under the plan unveiled Friday, all children under the age of six will be seen in the next 30 days, and the rest within three months.

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Published November 12, 2006

Anne Smiley: Lansing residents, look past 'NIMBY'

Anne Smiley lives in Lansing.

Lansing has a bad case of "NIMBY" syndrome.

There are numerous examples of "Not in My Back Yard" attitudes obstructing our city from providing more humane and restorative principles for those members of our society who need support rather than being further marginalized and ostracized.

The most recent of these is the resistance to Teen Challenge wanting to expand their services at the Holmes Street location.

The history of Teen Challenge goes back a ways in my neighborhood, where the county commissioners wanted to place a probation residential treatment center - the key word being "treatment."

Unfortunately, there was such community uproar about this facility anywhere near residential districts that it ended up close to the jail in Mason; not exactly a warm and welcoming feeling for those who are trying to become productive, respected citizens.

One of the locations where the Board of Commissioners had wanted to place the probation residential treatment center was where Teen Challenge currently is located on Willow Street. Although I would have preferred to have a bona fide treatment center, Teen Challenge residents have been excellent neighbors and community volunteers.

We have had no indications whatsoever that the residents were anything but people wanting and needing to become contributing members of their community.

There are several examples of neighborhoods being resistant to having people in their proximity who have questionable histories. Some neighbors in the Maplewood are opposed to having a service center for people in need of community resources in their area.

Some neighbors are resistant to having supportive housing for homeless people close to their neighborhoods.

The county is having a difficult time finding an appropriate location for an assessment center for at-risk youth because of potential opposition from neighborhoods.

If local citizens are involved in the decision-making and operations of these facilities that affect the entire neighborhood, everyone could benefit. The other incentive is that we would be helping to decrease the rate of recidivism back into the corrections system, which is very expensive and ineffective.

Many of the fears are unfounded, based on paranoia and ignorance. What if instead of NIMBY we

thought of the phrase "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" before passing judgment?

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Monday, NOV 13, 2006

Violent and juvenile crime on the rise

By. **Lorinda M. Bullock**

NNPA National Correspondent

WASHINGTON—Although St. Louis and Detroit took first- and second-place “dishonors” on Morgan Quinto’s 13th annual Most Dangerous Cities list this year, crime prevention and law enforcement experts say American cities everywhere—not just the top 25—need to be concerned with a growing trend of increasing violent crime.

“For a number of cities across the country, we’re seeing a significant increase in violent crime in three major areas: In robberies, in aggravated assaults and in murder,” said Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), a Washington-based law enforcement think tank.

According to a PERF report released earlier this year, “A Gathering Storm: Violent Crime in America,” 2005 numbers from the FBI showed the “largest single year percent increase in violent crime in 14 years.”

Nationally, homicide increased by 3.4 percent, robberies (3.9 percent) and aggravated assaults (1.8 percent). In 2005, more than 30,600 people were murdered, robbed and assaulted than in 2004, the report said.

“(For) A number of the cities, we’re seeing those increases are five, 10, 20-year highs and in some places, all-time highs. This is significantly different from what had been a pretty stable period of either decreasing crime or increases that were not as significant as we’ve seen in the past 18-24 months,” Wexler said.

Wexler and other crime prevention experts agree an increase in juvenile crime along with other social problems happening particularly in low income communities and communities of color are at the root causes of these current crime trends.

“Those are the communities where the schools aren’t up to par. Those are the communities with the highest amount of unemployment. Those are the communities with the least amount of government services, (and) the slowest responses even

from the police," said Ronald Hampton, executive director of the National Black Police Association.

Hampton, a retired officer of 24-years from Washington, D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department remembers Washington's toughest years in the 1980s when the crack-cocaine epidemic devastated the majority-Black Capital city, making Washington often at the top of the nation's crime lists. This year, Washington was number 19 on the list.

Hampton believes part of Washington's decline on the list is because of a recent influx of white professionals tired of commuting, buying homes and condos in historically Black neighborhoods. There is a greater police presence now.

He's even skeptical of recent crime prevention tactics when the city declared a crime emergency earlier this year to address crime wave of violence and robberies. City officials quickly approved street surveillance cameras, curfews for young people and increased police presence.

Even though Wexler applauds the city's efforts, Hampton said with elections on the horizon, local politicians had no choice.

He said recent sweeps reminded him of crime sweeps in the late 80s early 90s when the police boasted the arrests of more than 53,000 people. But Hampton said it was merely a "feel good" tactic because most of the arrests were misdemeanors and not felonies associated with the violent crimes that held the city hostage at the time.

"That didn't have anything to do with stopping crime," Hampton said of the sweeps both then and now. "But it was sold and the reason why it was sold was because everybody who had something to do with it just about was running for office."

In D.C., Wexler said 42 percent of robbery arrests last year were juveniles. He said cities like Minneapolis and Boston are among many U.S. cities dealing with juvenile crime and an increase in gang activity. In comparison to 2004, murder arrests of juveniles climbed 20 percent in 2005.

Although young people are increasingly getting involved in criminal activity, Wexler said they are only one part of the problem.

"In the 90s a number of people went to prison in record numbers and I think we're seeing them coming out of prison now some 10-12 years later. So you've got an increase in juveniles and an increase in the population that is in many cases coming out of prison not any better educated or prepared for the workforce," he said. "So they're older. And if they are not able to find a job and they don't have the necessary skills, regrettably the chances of them becoming involved in crime again are higher."

Wexler's organization studies these trends and also organizes events like the "Violent Crime Summit" that took place this summer where more than 170 mayors and police chiefs from all over the country and Canada came to share ideas.

The sacrifices made in the name of Homeland Security have also hurt local law enforcement in a number of cities. Some cities, Wexler said, like Cleveland and

Minneapolis have had to cut officers because of a lack of funds.

"We're on the front end of a tipping point for violence," Wexler said. "It's not like we're back in the 90s but we're seeing some very significant signs that cities are changing and that this is an important wake up call to do something about it."



Deaths reach 12-year high

Sunday, November 12, 2006

JILL ARMENTROUT

THE SAGINAW NEWS

Saginaw County babies are dying at a rate not seen in a dozen years.

Saginaw County's Fetal Infant Mortality Review team, which analyzes all cases of children who die before their first birthday, reported an increase in deaths to 28 during 2005 from 21 in 2004.

The rate of infant deaths per 1,000 births increased from 7.9 in 2004 to 10.5 in 2005.

These numbers are well below the 47 deaths in 1989, when record-keeping began, and the 2005 rate outpaces the statewide average of 7.9 deaths per 1,000 births.

State figures for 2006 aren't yet available.

In Saginaw County, health officials have recorded 13 deaths for 2006 through August.

In the county, the rate for deaths among white babies increased to 5.4 per 1,000 in 2003-05 from 5.3 in 2002-04. It increased to 18.9 from 17.8 among blacks infants in the same period.

State averages for 2003 to 2005 show Saginaw's gap between black and white infant death rates -- a ratio of 3.5 to 1 -- is one of the worst in the state. The ratio for 2005 alone is 5.4 to 1.

There were 2,667 live births in Saginaw County in 2005, state data show. There were 1,930 babies born to white mothers and 702 born to black mothers.

The 2005 data indicates that of the 28 babies who died, 20 of the fatalities, including two sets of twins, are attributable to preterm labor or low birth weight. The moms of 15 of these infants gave birth at less than 25 weeks.

The other deaths were attributed to birth defects (4), accidental suffocation (1), pneumonia (1), unknown (1) and manslaughter (1). Seven-week-old Malik A. Grice died from a blow to the head in February 2005.

Dawn Shanafelt, community health supervisor at the health department, took over coordination of Healthy Start and the Infant Mortality Coalition and review team this year after three years as a school nurse at Ricker Middle School in Saginaw.

"Many kids I talked to there think it is common for babies to die or to be born early," she said. "They don't know it's not normal. They don't know about the dangers of marijuana or sleeping with your baby."

The teams work with hospital records and interview mothers to analyze causes of death and determine common risk factors.

Records show the most common factors were mother's obesity and poverty. Mothers also reported late or inadequate prenatal care and smoking during pregnancy.

"Most all of the teams in the state have an excess of deaths due to prematurity," Fournier said. "Saginaw also has safe sleep issues. We have the advantage of a regional neonatal intensive care unit (at Covenant), which some areas don't have."

The causes also go in cycles, said Mary G. Mikulich, a Saginaw County Healthy Start nurse who is part of the review team.

"We are seeing more cases of unsafe sleep (leading to accidental suffocation) this year," she said. "Last year, we had very high prematurity rates, and that's still an issue. We also see surges of substance abuse."

Mikulich delves into hospital records, doctor's records and sometimes police reports. She notes any kinds of family problems, from domestic violence to family income as risk factors.

In the Regional Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Covenant Medical Center Harrison, 1447 N. Harrison in Saginaw, the staff fights the odds to save premature babies.

The center has reported an increase in tiny babies in recent years, following national trends, said neonatologist Dr. Khawar Mohsini.

There are a variety of risk factors, ranging from younger mothers who haven't had adequate prenatal care to older moms who have used fertility treatments and are more likely to have twins or triplets.

Multiple fetuses are less likely to grow as large or go to full term as single babies; nationally, these pregnancies account for about 3 percent of all births and 15 percent of all premature births.

This year, Mohsini has seen an increase in babies born to moms who use cocaine.

"Education will help, but we need more research. We are learning some things about stopping early labor, but still the rates are very high and increasing."

The coalition just isn't reaching all the women who need to hear their messages, said April A. Long, 25, of Saginaw. The mother of two daughters, 7 and 4, she attends the coalition meetings and received advocacy services at the health department.

"I was young with my first pregnancy, and I didn't know I was pregnant right away. I was smoking and drinking, and I knew I had to make changes. I had two scares with labor almost coming early. My daughter was a little small, but she is healthy. And my second child was 8 pounds."

Long wants to encourage other women to take care of themselves and their babies, but sees too many not getting help, she said.

"We need to reach out to young people, start inside the schools and educate males, too." v

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Too many babies dying

Sunday, November 12, 2006

JILL ARMENTROUT

THE SAGINAW NEWS

Twins Trishuan and Trishelle Williams came into the world in March 2004 more than two months before they were due, weighing less than 3 pounds apiece.

"I thought they were so pretty and red," says their mother, Sabrina D. Haynes-Williams. "They were so small, the blankets just covered them up. My husband was so nervous holding them."

The tiny twins spent weeks in the hospital as their parents waited and hoped for them to gain weight.

One in eight babies in the U.S. is born prematurely. They may need help with feeding and breathing and receive antibiotics and medications. They face greater risk of cerebral palsy, mental retardation, chronic lung disease, vision and hearing loss, and death.

In a new parry at an age-old problem, Saginaw County health leaders are recommending that doctors treat all women of child-bearing age as though they are "prepregnant" -- prescribing vitamins, monitoring prescriptions and treating risk factors.

The problem of premature birth hits hard in Saginaw County, where one of every 100 babies dies before reaching their first birthday, and infant deaths among black children outpace whites at a 3.3 to 1 ratio. Only Oakland County has a greater gap.

The Williams family knows the grief that comes with the death of an infant. Haynes-Williams and her husband, Derek D. Williams, took home only one baby that April.

Trishuan Williams is a healthy 2-year-old. Trishelle died after 21 days.

"I was taking a nap in the parents' sleep room at the hospital and had a dream of just one baby playing on the floor," her mother said. "The nurse woke me to tell me something was wrong."

Reducing the risks

Prematurity and low birth weight were contributing factors in 10 of the 21 infant deaths in Saginaw County in 2004 and 20 of the 27 deaths in 2005.

Saginaw County health and community leaders are working to remove barriers that may keep women from having healthy pregnancies -- even as researchers try to learn more about what causes labor to start before babies are ready to enter the world. Delivery before 37 weeks of gestation is consider premature; a full-term pregnancy is 40 weeks.

Nationally, the rate of premature deliveries has increased more than 30 percent since 1981.

At risk

Premature labor can happen to any pregnant woman, and no one knows exactly why.

Three groups of women are at greatest risk: Women who have had a previous preterm birth; women who are pregnant with multiples; and women with certain uterine or cervical abnormalities.

More than half a million babies are born too early each year in this country, according to the March of Dimes, which is taking on prematurity through research support and education.

Lack of prenatal care, stress, smoking, drinking or doing drugs also may put a woman at greater risk of preterm labor. So can such medical conditions as vaginal infections, sexually transmitted diseases and poor dental health. Diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity raise the risks, as do short breaks between pregnancies -- less than six to nine months.

"Most moms would do anything for their children, even if we have to put them in bed for months of their pregnancy, but sometimes changes like stopping smoking or coming to appointments seem harder," said Dr. Daniel J. Wechter, a Saginaw neonatologist who specializes in high-risk pregnancies.

Pre-pregnancy care

The Saginaw County Infant Mortality Coalition has created a guide to preconception care that members will start distributing to physicians in November.

It includes a questionnaire for doctors to use in talking to women about healthy pregnancies and reminder cards for patients.

"What we know about preconception care is providers aren't providing it, payers aren't covering it and patients aren't asking about it," said Rosemary Fournier of Saginaw, coordinator of the state's Fetal Infant Mortality Review. The care a woman receives before she becomes pregnant may prove even more important than prenatal care, experts say. That's because the most critical period for fetal development, during the first nine weeks of pregnancy, happens when many women don't know they're pregnant. Exposure to tobacco, drugs, alcohol and workplace hazards can harm a newly developing fetus.

Fournier said that preventing unwanted pregnancies -- studies show that 40 percent of pregnancies are unplanned -- is a large part of the solution for having healthier babies.

"How can a woman commit to a pregnancy outcome if it's not wanted in the first place? These are the very moms we have to reach," she said.

State Department of Community Health data shows unintended infants are twice as likely to arrive prematurely and 10 to 15 times more likely to have low birth weight.

Guidelines

New guidelines from the federal Centers for Disease Control call for all women of childbearing age to treat themselves -- and for doctors to treat them -- as "prepregnant" and monitor the risk factors associated with preterm births.

"All health care providers of women in childbearing years should ask if they could be pregnant or want to be before they write a prescription," said Dr. Tom A. Raskauskas, director of the obstetric/gynecology program at Synergy Medical Education Alliance in Saginaw and an Infant Mortality Coalition member. "Make sure they are getting adequate birth control or start them on a prenatal vitamin. Make sure their medical conditions are under control."

The questions are simple but aren't on all doctors' radar screens, Raskauskas said.

"We're not going to get to patients if we can't convince doctors to counsel them about this," he said.

The coalition also is working with St. Mary's of Michigan's Saginaw emergency rooms to link up pregnant women to services when they come in for treatment and don't have regular doctors.

Greater risks

Black women, women younger than 17 or older than 35 and poor women are at greater risk of having a premature baby than others. Babies born to black mothers have the highest rate of infant death in this country -- 13.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with a rate of 5.7 for babies born to white women.

Studies show women of African descent may have higher rates of premature delivery because a genetic variant that could cause the increased risk of premature rupture of membranes that surround the fetus and amniotic fluid.

Complications

Any baby born at less than 5.5 pounds is considered low birth weight. Technology has made it possible for

those born at about 2 pounds to have a good chance at normal health, but the smaller babies face serious complications.

In addition to the human and emotional toll, premature births bring an additional financial burden.

March of Dimes research shows hospital charges for babies born without complications averaged \$1,700 in 2003. Hospital costs for infants born too small or too soon averaged \$77,000.

In terms of medical care, lost household and labor market productivity, and early intervention and education services, preterm births cost the United States more than \$26.2 billion in 2005, according to Institute of Medicine estimates.

The need to promote infant health does not end when a baby leaves the hospital.

The Saginaw County Infant Mortality Coalition also promotes safe sleep education, to reduce deaths that occur in adult beds where blankets or a parent rolling over can suffocate an infant. Saginaw County schools now have a curriculum on safe sleep to add to health classes, said Lynn A. Scheerhorn, coordinator of the coalition.

In 2002, the group introduced a five-question survey to help identify pregnant women at risk for substance abuse and refer them to treatment. Providers at Health Delivery Inc., Synergy, the Health Department and several doctor's offices are using the survey. Between January and March, they screened 113 women and found 46 with risk factors. They referred 10 for treatment, sent seven to smoking cessation classes and provided education to 29.

Cable television spots feature women and promote breastfeeding, safe sleep, preconception planning and prematurity risks.

In July, the state health department introduced its Plan First! program to help women who don't qualify for Medicaid pay for family planning services and birth control. More than 11,500 women have signed up. The project funds women who make up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level -- up to \$18,130 a year for a single woman. Call (800) 642-3195 or visit the county health department for information. v

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Fewer babies dying locally

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, November 13, 2006

By Shantell M. Kirkendoll

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FLINT - Genesee County's infant mortality rate plummeted to an all-time low in 2005, indicating that hard work on the persistent problem is finally having an impact.

New data compiled by the state Department of Community Health show that the local infant mortality rate fell to 8.9 deaths for every 1,000 births.

Fewer black babies are dying, but they are still twice as likely as white babies to die before their first birthday.

Black infant deaths fell to 15.2, down from 22.1 in 2004.

"It's great news, and there's reason to believe that 2006 will show the same downward trajectory," said Robert Pestronk, director of the Genesee County Health Department.

Infant mortality measures how many babies died before age 1. The leading causes of death are premature birth and low birth weight.

For years, the county has convened experts on the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review team to analyze what may have led to a baby's death, and beginning in 1999, millions in federal funds have been steered to Flint to address infant deaths.

"Sometimes moms don't know about available resources or need the insight of an advocate, a sister-girlfriend, to see their way through prenatal appointments and social issues," said Terry Brannon, coordinator of the local Maternal Infant Health Advocates program.

The MIHAs act as cheerleaders for pregnant women and support them in making decisions about their households and health. Some even tag along on doctors' appointments if the woman wishes but do not give medical advice.

A variety of activities, such as REACH 2010, the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health federal grant given by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and safe sleeping campaigns have been under way to reduce infant deaths.

Pestronk said a major change was not expected overnight.

Infant mortality is a complex problem. It's considered a measure of a community's overall health as well as its social and economic well-being, he said.

Obstetricians gather quarterly to discuss issues facing women, such as a higher-than-average infection rate during pregnancies. Infections can cause premature labor.

Doctors, too, have said infant mortality goes beyond medicine. It's also driven by what's going on in women's lives, such as job and financial security, safe housing and for black women, racism.

"I hope it's a sign of a trend," said Dr. Allan Ebert, a Flint family practitioner and member of the infant death review team. "Time will tell if it's a blip in statistics."

Genesee County continues to have a higher infant mortality rate than Michigan's eight deaths per 1,000 births, which is higher than the rest of the nation.

"I hope we're making a difference," Ebert said. "A lot of good people, time and energy has been spent on this. At an organizational level, I still don't think we have a handle on what's really causing high infant mortality and what it will take to make it better."

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Ludington Daily News

Posted: 11-9-2006

Community seeks to end area homelessness

By MELISSA MCGUIRE

Daily News Staff Writer

The Mason County Homelessness Continuum of Care, made up of several human service organizations and community organizations in Mason County, gathered at Harbor View Marina to present the Mason County 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

"It's not just a challenge, but a measure of our compassion," said Jim Thomas of West Michigan Community Mental Health.



The plan is part of a statewide plan made by each specific county to end homelessness in Michigan. The goal is to end homelessness by the year 2016 in the area and there is a 52-page document available that outlines the plan.

"The 10-year plan, it's big, its really big," Randy Butters said while opening the program. "Affordable housing is a priority in our community, it's a big deal because it's do-able."

Finding affordable housing in Mason County is the main priority of the plan. Shelters were also discussed and how they are only for women and small children. The capacity of C.O.V.E.'s women's shelter is 18 beds and the Jericho House has shelter available for 10 people.

The presentation given by the partners in the group included statistics about the average income of people in the county and what the family would have left for disposable income when housing costs were subtracted.

Another important focus of the meeting was that homelessness is in Mason County. The definition of homelessness used is a condition of having no fixed, adequate or secure place to live.

According to the presentation, an average of 65 people in Mason County are homeless. Jim Thomas told people that it's not just the stereotypical homeless, some are families who have a member who lost their job, teens who are pregnant and kicked out of their homes, and even people who work and just don't make enough to support their family in the housing in this area.

Kathy Kovalchik-Lacko said the plan has monthly and yearly checkpoints or goals that will be met to ensure the plan is complete in ten years.

Kim Welch from the Salvation Army said a position within her organization will be made just to be a reference point and resource to helping people find housing.

Kovalchik-Lacko said each year, around the same time in November, the Homelessness Continuum of Care will present what they have done so far to the community as part of the plan.

Lynne Russell, director of the United Way of Mason County, closed the presentation with a statement emphasizing the importance of community partnership.

"The worst thing we can do is go back to our workplaces or organizations and do our own thing," Russell said. "We need to work

together as a community.”

The Mason County Homelessness Continuum of Care includes: Staircase Youth Services, City of Ludington, Mason-Oceana Department of Human Services, Mason County Central Schools, Habitat for Humanity, H.E.L.P. Ministries, Oakview Medical Care Facility, Jericho House, United Way of Mason County, West Michigan Community Mental Health, C.O.V.E. and The Salvation Army. They meet the third Thursday of every month. Call 845-1723 for details or to get involved.

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? 2002 Ludington Daily News.

Local officials adopt 10-year plan to end homeless



Bryan Meyers, who lives at the Salvation Army's homeless shelter in Escanaba, washes dishes for the Army's annual pasty-making fund-raiser. Meyers spends his mornings doing community service and in the afternoons he looks for work. (Daily Press photo by Kim Strom)

By Kim Strom - kstrom@dailypress.net

ESCANABA — Representing the Delta County Coalition Against Homelessness, Maj. Bill Cox of the Salvation Army in Escanaba recently presented a “10-year Plan to End Homelessness in Delta County” to officials in Lansing recently.

A total of 60 plans covering the state's 83 counties were presented during the Michigan Homeless Summit in Lansing Oct. 24 as part of the Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness.

The local plan will focus on prevention by shifting to a “housing first” philosophy, Cox said.

“Everyone says they (homeless) should get a job first, but that's crazy. It sets them up for failure,” he said. “People need stability first. Statistically, if they have their own homes, they don't repeat (homelessness).”

The goal is to have immediate access to housing and to provide individual case management, reducing the need for emergency shelter from 50 days to five days by year 2015. According to the plan's vision statement, “There will be safe, affordable, permanent housing for all people in Delta County.”

At any given time, 30 to 60 people are considered homeless in the area, said Cox. They are being sheltered in motels and sleeping rooms, in the Salvation Army's temporary shelter, or are known to be “couch surfing,” sleeping in various homes, according to Cox.

Bryan Meyers, 29, is homeless and being helped by the Salvation Army's temporary shelter. Originally from Baltimore, Md., Meyers moved to Ford River near Fuller Park five years ago to escape a drug abusing environment.

Meyers also suffers from bipolar disorder, a condition that causes severe mood swings. When off his medication,

Meyers has used drugs and alcohol to cope, which got him into trouble and in jail on more than one occasion.

Upon being released Oct. 31 from a 10-month jail stay, during which he went through a divorce and lost his job, Meyers had no place to stay.

"This has been the hardest time in my life," he said. "I was overwhelmed." He was referred to the Salvation Army, which put him into three-month housing. "I'm just taking it one day at a time now," he said.

Other causes of homelessness locally include domestic violence, release from foster care, addiction, mental illness and family problems, Cox said.

Existing funds simply manage the problem rather than prevent it, said Cox.

The Salvation Army home houses up to four men. Cox also attempts to help prevent homelessness by providing opportunity for the men to rehabilitate by finding work, remaining drug and alcohol free, and getting medical help and counseling if needed.

Cox has other ideas to help people obtain permanent shelter.

The Salvation Army could help those in need lease a home for three months, he explained. Once they are stable and bringing in an income, the person or family could then take over the lease.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Sleep-out spotlights homeless problem

Monday, November 13, 2006

By Kathy Jessup

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With tonight's temperatures predicted to hover in the lower 30s, it's going to be a cold night for some Kalamazoo-area people to experience homelessness.

Kalamazoo Homeless Action Network officials are estimating 40 to 75 people may brave the elements in tents, cardboard boxes and sleeping bags in Bronson Park tonight to mark national ``One Night Without a Home."

Michael Evans, KHAN's lead organizer, said city officials have agreed to waive several of Kalamazoo's new park-use rules for the event, which is designed to spotlight what Evans calls a need for more affordable housing in Kalamazoo County.

A year ago, Evans said, KHAN was ticketed for having a fire in the park during a homeless-awareness rally. Today Evans says homeless advocates and the city are working more cooperatively to address what Evans says is a growing number of people living in Kalamazoo in shelters or campsites or ``sofa-surfing" with friends.

``There's so much hope right now that we can get chronically homeless people into apartments and make an immediate impact," Evans said, referring to trust-fund money that's been promised by both the city and Kalamazoo County to help provide housing.

Besides government funding, Evans said, Kalamazoo County could consider a new fee on all home sales to sustain a housing trust fund. Evans suggested assessing a \$10 fee for every \$100,000 of each home's sale price, for example, to provide ongoing trust-fund income.

Another plan might convert tax-reverted properties into housing for people who earn up to \$8.50 an hour, he said.

Evans said neither idea has gained any official endorsements yet.

KHAN estimates 100 to 125 units will be necessary to house 1,000 people, including families with children.

Today's sleepover kicks off a week of events marking National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week here.

An ecumenical prayer vigil begins at 7 p.m., followed by a ``homeless story circle" and music until 10 p.m.

Another prayer service is planned at 7 a.m. Tuesday before a free breakfast is hosted for participants at McNally's Kitchen downtown.

A series of 30-minute prayer vigils are set for 7 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday. Tuesday's vigil will be outside the Kalamazoo County Building, 201 W. Kalamazoo Ave., Wednesday's will be in Martin Luther King Jr. Park on Rose Street, and Thursday's is scheduled at Rose Park Veterans Memorial on East Michigan Avenue, near King Highway.

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November 10, 2006

After nightmare vote, state GOP regroup

Mark Hornbeck / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

How the mighty Michigan Republicans have fallen in four short years.

In former Gov. John Engler's last term, the dominant GOP ruled not only the executive roost but also fielded clear majorities in the state House and Senate.

Come Jan. 1, however, they'll remain shut out of the governor's office, and be in the minority of the state House.

Is this a party in need of a major makeover? Is the Republican message just too conservative in a ticket-splitting state that leans slightly Democratic?

Depends who you ask.

Detroit News pollster Ed Sarpolus says survey numbers suggest Michigan voters want a kinder, gentler Republican Party than the one that this week lost the governor's office for the second consecutive term, relinquished a nine-member majority in the House, and saw its edge in the Senate narrowed.

"Republicans have to find a message that provides for those Republicans struggling economically," Sarpolus said. "Anti-tax, anti-government, sure, but they have to be for some kind of safety net other than 'get a job.' "

In the late days of the campaign, health care vaulted to No. 2 on the top issues list, behind the economy. Gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos lost points, Sarpolus said, when he said the best remedy for having no health coverage was finding a job.

Engler, who won three terms, understood the safety net thing, Sarpolus said. That's why he never supported the 48-month welfare cutoff that DeVos advocated. And that's why Engler, rather than exhorting Michiganians on welfare to get a job, retooled human services agencies and said "we'll *help* you find a job."

Tom Shields, Republican strategist, believes the party needs to sharpen its message, not soften it.

"Let's keep things in perspective. Republicans had one bad year," Shields said. "These things happen in cycles.

"The Republicans really have to take a look at how they take their message to the voters so they understand the differences between the two parties in this state. They need to sharpen the message, look for areas of contrast. And rhetoric is not enough. We need to show some definite plans."

Saul Anuzis, chairman of the state Republican Party, intends to hold a series of "listen and learn" sessions to figure out what the GOP can do to win next time. But he figures the Michigan election outcome wasn't so much a repudiation of Republican philosophy here, but fallout from an anti-Republican tide that swelled up in Washington and rolled across the nation.

"We bucked the national tsunami and held on to our Republican majority in the Michigan state Senate and re-elected two statewide office holders, Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and Attorney General Mike Cox," Anuzis said.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm dispatched DeVos by a whopping 14 percent, beating him in 54 of 83 counties -- including Macomb, home of the vaunted Reagan Democrats, which hadn't voted for a Democratic governor in 20 years.

But under term limits, she can't run again in 2010. So the state GOP is looking ahead.

Anuzis and others noted the Republicans still have a formidable stable of candidates to saddle up for 2008 U.S. Senate and 2010 gubernatorial races, including: Land and Cox, U.S. Reps. Mike Rogers of Brighton and Candice Miller of Harrison Township, and Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard, who lost the U.S. Senate race to incumbent Debbie Stabenow, D-Lansing, Tuesday but won some admirers.

Anuzis' own job may be in jeopardy in the coming months. He acknowledges a move by some in the party to oust him from the chairmanship and to replace him with David Dishaw, a west Michigan party activist who was finance chairman of Land's re-election campaign.

The GOP, which was supposed to have the state-of-the-art get-out-the-vote plan, got trounced in the critical turnout wars. Compared to the last gubernatorial election, Republican turnout was up 9 percent, Democratic turnout increased 19 percent and the independent vote -- which went heavily Democratic -- shot up 39 percent.

But the move against Anuzis appears to be related more to positioning for future presidential and gubernatorial races than to making any major changes in the party structure in the wake of heavy election losses.

As for the new makeup of the Legislature, the new Senate majority leader -- the favorites are Michael Bishop of Rochester, Wayne Kuipers of Holland and Jason Allen of Traverse City -- will be a lawmaker who is to the political right of outgoing leader Ken Sikkema of Wyoming. The new leader will be responsible for providing the loyal opposition to Granholm and the Democratic House.

But Sikkema said Republicans -- and Democrats -- should be mindful over the next few years that "the governing majority in the state capital is a centrist majority."

"If some of the challenges facing the state are going to get solved, people will have to recognize you won't govern from the far right or the far left, you have to govern from the center," he said.

Whether they heed that advice remains to be seen.

You can reach Mark Hornbeck at (313) 222-2470 or mhornbeck@detnews.com.

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November 10, 2006

Around Metro Detroit: Capitol Report**Lame-duck Legislature faces business tax challenge**

Election upheaval may cause the delay of several issues before lawmakers in the session's final days.

Gary Heinlein / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- Lawmakers are back in action, but there's doubt about how much the lame-duck session will accomplish, following the election upheaval that grants Democrats control of the House for the next two years.

The switch introduces more confusion than usual to the urgent, final days of session, when sticky issues usually get unstuck and deals are made on the fly.

House Speaker Craig DeRoche, R-Novi, whose party's election setback will cost him his top leadership role next year, wasn't certain what can be accomplished. He said there are "a lot of numbers in that equation."

Consider the biggest task the members face: Rewriting the state's main business tax.

Republicans and Gov. Jennifer Granholm have clashed over how it should be done.

Earlier this year, lawmakers used a citizen referendum to eliminate the \$1.8-billion tax in 2008 -- a move Granholm denounced as irresponsible.

GOP lawmakers wanted a new, reduced tax they say is necessary to encourage business expansion. Granholm's opponent, Dick DeVos, would have signed such a measure had he become governor.

But Granholm says the state can't handle a tax reduction without cutting vital services. Now she's in a position to veto any plan she doesn't like and wait for a friendlier Legislature in 2007.

Movement on that issue clearly is uncertain, but Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema said lawmakers still can:

Expand competition by letting more than one video company bid on cable TV and Internet service to a community. Opponents claim the bill will end local public access channels and cut franchise revenue cities and townships get.

Allow school boards to make available data that would let any insurer bid on their employees' health coverage. The organization that handles coverage for most school employees claims it already economizes.

Limit welfare to four years per family. Granholm says she could accept that only if there were exceptions for people with serious barriers to employment, seriously ill children or other tough circumstances.

The 12-15 remaining days are enough time to resolve such matters, according to Sikkema's spokesman, Ari Adler.

"It's just a question of whether people want to work together in the next couple of weeks."

Gongwer News Service contributed to this report. You can reach Gary Heinlein at (313) 222-2470 or gheinlein@detnews.com.

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Article published Nov 12, 2006

Goodfellows: More families will need help

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A Westland nonprofit group that raises money to buy Christmas gifts for needy children will face a formidable task this holiday season.

Due to job losses and shrinking household incomes, more local families will need help this year as the Westland Goodfellows organization struggles with its own drop in revenues, officials said.

Last year, Goodfellows helped more than 600 children in 225 families, Westland Fire Department Capt. John Adams said.

This year, more than 300 families are expected to need help.

Donation chairman Vic Barra estimated that hundreds more children will need help.

"The number could go as high as 1,000 children," he said.

That comes amid shrinking revenues, according to the group's Web site. Goodfellows volunteers last year raised \$10,343 -- down from \$16,469 in 2002.

"We've had an obvious downturn in the local economy and layoffs in the auto sector," Barra said.

Many families are hurting, and others who didn't expect to need help will, indeed, be seeking assistance, Barra said.

"It could be a mother who went through a divorce who's not getting the child support she's supposed to get," Barra said. "We have all of life's difficult scenarios."

Volunteers still will have the Goodfellows newspaper sales at major city intersections on Nov. 24, during the group's long-standing, post-Thanksgiving fund-raiser.

But several other events also will help raise money.

On Thursday, Nov. 16, Uno Chicago Grill will host a wine-tasting event 5:30-8:30 p.m., with singer Tyrone Hamilton. Appetizers and pastries will be served, general manager Sue Walsh said.

Admission is \$30 in advance, with tickets available at the restaurant on Wayne Road next to Westland Shopping Center, Walsh said. Tickets will cost \$35 at the door.

The event is being billed as the Hunters Widow Wine-Tasting event -- an attempt to draw women whose husbands are away for hunting season, Walsh said.

On Thursday, Dec. 14, Uno Chicago Grill will sponsor a champagne-tasting event 5:30-8:30 p.m., also featuring Hamilton and with the same admission.

However, anyone who wants to attend both Uno Chicago Grill events can pay one admission of \$50, Walsh said. Both events will include raffles of prizes.

On Saturday, Dec. 2, Strykers Lounge at Ford and Hix roads will host a Goodfellows fund-raiser 5-10:30 p.m., with a disc jockey and raffles.

On Friday, Dec. 8, Marvaso's Italian Grille and the next-door Electric Stick billiards hall will sponsor a fund-raiser. A 9-ball pool tournament will be held 6-8 p.m. with a \$10 admission, Barra said, and raffles will be held 5-10:30 p.m. Hamilton will again perform.

Marvaso's and the Electric Stick are located in a strip mall on the northwest corner of Hunter and Wayne roads.

Prizes raffled during the various events will include such items as 20-inch televisions, DVD players, MP3 players, jewelry, haircuts, oil changes, and tickets for next season's Detroit Tigers games, Barra said.

Fund-raising aside, Barra also said Goodfellows will need help with packing children's toys 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15, at the city's senior citizen Friendship Center, on Newburgh south of Ford.

Moreover, help will be needed delivering gifts starting at 9 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.

To help with packing or delivery, or for more information, call Barra at (734) 637-5579 or Adams at (734) 320-4218.

For more information about Goodfellows, visit the group's Web site at www.westlandgoodfellows.org.

ClickOnDetroit.com

Rescue 4 the United Way

POSTED: 2:19 pm EST November 10, 2006

UPDATED: 6:39 pm EST November 12, 2006

Local 4 and United Way are proud to be a part of an effort to help Metro Detroiters in hard times.

On Monday, Nov. 13, Local 4 and the United Way will be holding a phone bank to accept donations for the United Way.

The phone bank will be open from 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

If you would like to donate, call 313-298-WDIV.

You can also log onto www.onewaytohelp.org.



Warming the kids takes action

Sunday, November 12, 2006

What is Warm the Children?

It's a pair of pink corduroy pants for 8-year-old Myesha.

A warm hat and gloves for 10-year-old William.

And a snugly pair of boots for 6-year-old Taleja.

They are just three of the children who received new winter clothing so far this year through Warm the Children. The nonprofit program pairs children in need with a variety of clothing items to keep them warm and dry: coats and snow pants, boots and gloves, jeans and tennis shoes, sweatshirts and shirts, underwear and socks.

It is truly an example of the Jackson-area community working together to help our less-fortunate brethren. People, like you and me, donate money to pay for the items. The Community Action Agency screens the families to choose the most needy. The Jackson Junior Welfare League coordinates the volunteers. The volunteers, people like you and me, shop with the families at Meijer's to insure that the \$83 voucher for each child is spent wisely.

I have been a volunteer shopper since the program's inception nine years ago. All the families I have met have valued every dollar, weighing clothing choices to stretch the money to get the best deal for the children. The moms peruse the sale racks, ever watchful for clearance tags, the best buys of all.

Last Sunday, William's mother Ayshia unearthed a pair of black jeans on clearance. William liked the look; his mom like the price: \$10.

It was a great shopping trip: two pairs of boots, one pair of tennis shoes, numerous pairs of pants, shirts, underwear, socks, hats and gloves. Our shopping cart was full with lovely clothing items for Ayshia's three children.

Our calculations were a little off at the register so Ayshia ran back to get another package of socks to edge one child's total closer to the \$83 mark.

I felt good knowing these three children would be outfitted for winter. But there are so many more children who need warm clothing. This year, more than 1,300 children are signed up. That means we need to collect \$107,900, a huge number. So far about \$21,000 has been donated.

Yes, it helps that Meijer started the drive with a generous \$10,000 contribution. Yes, it makes a difference that the Jackson Citizen Patriot collects the money and keeps the accounting straight for free. Yes, it helps that scores of folks volunteer to shop. Yes, it helps that all donations are tax-deductible.

But more is needed. Warm the Children needs more money, more shoppers.

I hope you find it in your hearts to help.

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WZZM13 ONLINE - ABC TELEVISION for ALL OF WEST MICHIGAN

No child support could mean no hunting

John Bumgardner

Created: 11/10/2006 6:06:06 PM
Updated: 11/10/2006 7:26:55 PM

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Michigan's firearm deer season begins next Wednesday but parents who don't keep up with child support will not get the chance to hunt.

Michigan is penalizing deadbeat parents by suspending hunting licenses.

The state can also suspend driver's and fishing licenses for non-payment of child support.



One official says, "We send a notice to them telling them there's a problem with their account and it runs about two months and the payments have been sporadic at best. We let them know that if they don't contact our office, we will take measures to suspend their deer hunting license."

The program began back in 1999. The state and federal government have both passed laws authorizing child support enforcement.

Web Editor: [Chris Fleszar](#), Managing Editor

Web Editor: [John Bumgardner](#), Assignment Desk



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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Estranged husband accused in stabbing

Man charged with attempted murder after sleeping woman suffers many wounds

Monday, November 13, 2006

BY AMALIE NASH

News Staff Reporter

An Ann Arbor woman was repeatedly stabbed in her bed early Sunday after she said she refused to speak to her estranged husband when he entered her bedroom, city police said.

The woman, 51, was in stable condition at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, police said. They said she was stabbed at least eight times in the stomach, neck, arm and chest.

Her estranged husband, Moussa Toure, 41, was arrested and charged with attempted murder. Toure was arraigned Sunday and is being held on \$500,000 bond. He will have a preliminary hearing Nov. 22.

The woman's 13-year-old son called police at 2:25 a.m. Sunday and said she was injured inside their home in the 2800 block of Braeburn Circle on the city's south side. The boy said he awoke to his mother's screams, reports said. A friend of the boy who was spending the night told police the estranged husband ran past him, telling him to call police and saying, "I just stabbed my wife," reports said.

The woman was found bloodied but conscious in her bedroom. She told police she was sleeping when Toure opened her bedroom door and asked to speak to her. When she told him no, he began stabbing her, reports said. The attack stopped when she began crying, and Toure said, "I just wanted to talk to you," reports said.

Toure was arrested driving on Ellsworth Road minutes later. Police said he was covered in blood and had a bloody knife in his pocket.

The woman told police she was separated from Toure, but allowed him to return for a few days because he had nowhere to go.

Reporter Amalie Nash can be reached at anash@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6832.

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Suspects in slaying were free to leave group home

Of The Oakland Press

Officials of the company that owns an adult foster care facility that was home to two men accused of killing a 73-year-old liquor store owner said it is not "unusual for people in foster care settings to have freedom of movement."

"Michigan has a strong patients' rights system so that people don't get stuck in state hospitals," Alternative Services Inc. of Michigan Executive Director Robert McLuckie said. "We can't restrict a person without a good reason. They have rights, too."

Adam Kadrioski and Gordon Melling, who were residents of the facility on South Boulevard in Rochester Hills, will stand trial in the beating death of Cedomir Taseski, who died during a botched robbery attempt Nov. 6 at Bozana's Liquor Beer & Wine.

Taseski and his wife owned the party store on Auburn Road in Rochester Hills. The couple, who lived in Macomb County's Washington Township, came to the United States from Macedonia.

Kadrioski, 30, and Melling, 47, have said they had lived at the facility for six months.

Oakland County Sheriff's Office deputies said both men were customers at the store and accused them of intending to kill Taseski and his wife.

By law, residents of adult foster care homes are allowed to exercise their constitutional freedoms, which include the right to leave the facility, McLuckie said. A list of rights is required by law to be read to each resident. Patients also must be offered a copy of these rights.

McLuckie said federal and state laws also prohibit him from providing specific information or identifying people who live in foster homes.

The Michigan Department of Human Services oversees the licensing of these facilities. Department spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said she couldn't comment whether there is a pending investigation of the facility, and that any past violations of state guidelines are listed on the department's Web site.

The facility has no record of violating serious guidelines and is expected to go up for license renewal next August, according to those records.

The foster home on South Boulevard, McLuckie said, provides specialized adult foster care to people with mental health disabilities.

Alternative Services Inc. of Michigan has been providing such services for the past 30 years and has to comply with specific rules, as well as be inspected by several different agencies, he said.

As for the patients, McLuckie said they are placed in a "person-centered plan," which spells out the conditions of how they are supported.

"It addresses a positive lifestyle," he said. "It's more about, 'Let's help this person have a quality life experience,' and the individual participates in that plan."

"It's sort of a map for the year."

Kadrioski and Melling - who are each being charged with open murder, conspiracy to commit murder and armed robbery - had driver's licenses and were able to work, Oakland County Sheriff's Office officials said.

They have no record of prior criminal convictions. But Kadrioski had his driver's license suspended after several ticket violations. He also had bench warrants issued for failing to appear in court.

Melling also had a bench warrant for his arrest for a parking violation.

Both men have admitted to being addicted to drugs and said the crime was partly motivated by a desire to steal money to buy drugs.

McLuckie said what happened was a tragedy, but it doesn't mean there is a higher tendency of violent behavior in people who are mentally ill.

"Research shows that people with mental illness do not have a higher incidence of violent acts than ordinary community people," he said.

But patients who have mental disabilities do tend to be more susceptible to substance abuse, said Bob Kercorian, chief executive officer of Havenwyck Hospital, a 182-bed psychiatric and substance abuse facility in Auburn Hills.

"When you are mentally ill, you have impulse problems," Kercorian said, adding about one out of every three or four patients treated at Havenwyck has substance abuse problems.

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E-MAIL'S TRAIL: Big Boss is watching office messages

BY MARGARITA BAUZA

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

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The salacious instant messages to congressional pages that led to Rep. Mark Foley's downfall in September should have caught the attention of millions of workers and employers.

It was a high-profile example of a growing problem at work: Employees have become so comfortable using e-mail, the Internet and instant messaging that the negative consequences of mixing work, play and technology are catching up.

Numerous surveys show that firings as a result of improper e-mail use have become more common in the last five years.

A 2006 survey by the **ePolicy Institute** in Columbus, Ohio, showed that 26% of 416 companies participating in the survey have fired someone for inappropriate use of e-mail, up from 25% in 2004 and 21% in 2001.

The trend has coincided with the increased use of company e-mail monitoring, firms routinely blocking questionable Web sites and the widespread introduction of e-mail use policies.

"People have this incredible belief that their e-mail is private and that employers are not allowed to monitor it," said Kristin Byron, assistant professor of management at the Whitman School at Syracuse University. "The reality is that employers can monitor e-mail."

"It makes sense to me," she added. "People do things that are pretty dangerous. They have to protect their business."

Mia Hawkins, a case manager at the **Michigan Department of Human Services** in Warren, said she uses her work e-mail strictly for business, in part because of her employer's constant reminders.

"They make sure they reiterate company policy constantly, and every year, they make us sign a contract about appropriate e-mail use," said Hawkins, 37, of Eastpointe. "Whether it's verbal or written, we are constantly getting reminders from directors and department heads."

And because e-mail has made higher-ups more accessible than ever to rank-and-file employees, Byron advises workers to think hard before striking the send key.

"People forget that you have to be courteous, polite, include a greeting, a closing, and make it clear what you're referring to," Byron said.

Workers also often forget that e-mail doesn't just disappear after they delete it from their inboxes. The evidence sticks around on computers. E-mail remains company property long after workers kill the messages. Most companies routinely archive e-mails for a specific amount of time.

A recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management showed that 58% of human resource professionals said their organizations have increased monitoring of employee Internet use. Duane Marshall, CEO and president of **Innovative Technology Group Services** in Shelby Township, said the trend to increasingly monitor e-mail and Internet use has played out in his business.

"When we first started, very few people asked us to monitor e-mail or instant messaging, but employers are now realizing that this is a problem," Marshall said, adding that such services now represent 70% of the company's business.

"Employers are paying them to perform a function, and they're at work doing online shopping, gaming, trading



Duane Marshall, 31, of Shelby Township always has his eye on the Internet and e-mail services for the companies that employ him as their IT professional. As president of Innovative Technology Group Services in Shelby Township, he says he sees frequent misuse of the Internet. (ERIC SEALS/Detroit Free Press)

Workplace scrutiny on the rise

Employee monitoring increases

In a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 58% of human resource professionals said their organization increased its monitoring of employee Internet use. The survey of 442 human resource professionals was conducted Sept. 29 and a report was released Oct. 31.

Survey respondents were asked:

Has your organization increased employee monitoring within the past 12 months?

54% said no, and we have no plans to do so.

stocks and checking out pornography when, in fact, they should be working. Not only are they not performing, but they're using company resources to not do work," he said.

This is an increasing concern for employers, said Nancy Flynn, executive director of the ePolicy Institute.

The institute's 2004 employee e-mail and Internet survey found that 86% of employees engage in personal e-mail and 10% of those who do so spend four or more hours a day e-mailing.

"That's half the work day," Flynn said.

Flynn said that fear of lawsuits against the company -- for reasons of discrimination or sexual harassment -- is a growing reason employers are becoming more vigilant about nonessential e-mail use. "E-mail is the electronic equivalent of DNA evidence," Flynn said. "You can take it to the bank that employee e-mail will be subpoenaed in a lawsuit."

Melanie LaFave, a partner at the Southfield law firm **Jaffe Raitt Heuer & Weiss PC**, said that more firms are seeking guidance in writing employee e-mail policies. She said it's essential for companies to have a firm policy on e-mail and Internet use.

"As long as they have a policy in place that says that everything in the system is company property, it should be difficult for an employee to make a claim," LaFave said.

At **Oakwood Hospital** in Dearborn, computers are armed with software that regulates Internet access, blocking some sites and pop-ups. All new employees are lectured on the appropriate use of work e-mail, said human resources director Dan O'Connor.

Oakwood's approach on monitoring of e-mail and Internet use is productivity-driven, he added.

"It's the same as if they're taking too many smoke breaks, on the phone a lot or their performance is being affected. We have to take a look."

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27% said yes, and have explained the monitoring changes to employees.

10% said no, but we plan to do so.

9% said yes, but we have not explained the monitoring change to employees.

In which of the following activities did your organization increase its employee monitoring?

58% increased monitoring employee Internet use.

48% increased monitoring employee computer use in general.

45% increased monitoring employee e-mail use.

41% increased auditing employee expense forms.

30% increased monitoring employee use of cell phones.

21% increased monitoring employee telephone use.

13% increased monitoring employee instant messaging.

13% increased use of cameras to monitor employee activities.

12% increased monitoring of employees' movement at work.

7% increased monitoring the use of camera cell phones.

5% read employee e-mails.

1% read employee postal mail.

Policy parameters

What an e-mail and Internet use policy should do:

- It should remind employees that electronic mail is the property of the company and of the employer, and that they should not be using e-mail for personal messages.
- It should tell employees that they shouldn't be accessing the Internet for anything but business purposes and that the company will review use at any time.
- It should say that the employee should have no expectation of privacy in e-mail.

Source: Melanie LaFave, partner at the law firm Jaffe Raitt Heuer & Weiss PC in Southfield